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ABSTRACT

This project report explores the potential of using the strategies and methods of the Reading Recovery Program to teach adult nonreaders. The following assessment procedures assist the tutor in determining the student's reading level: letter identification, reading vocabulary, concepts about print, writing vocabulary, dictation, and text reading. The reading and writing activities presented in this booklet emphasize reading for meaning through text reading and learning strategies that incorporate all three cuing systems. Writing activities include learning letters, sentence writing, additional sentence writing, and spelling words. The following reading activities are included: new readings; analyze student's reading; questioning strategies--meaning substitution, visual error, grammatical or structural error, and omissions and insertions; reread for fluency; and model good reading behaviors. Additional activities include sight words and varied activities. Four handouts are provided. (NLA)

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Strategies for Improving Adult Reading Performance

Special Demonstration Project
Adult Basic Education Program
Marion City Schools

Project Number: 044339-AB-SD-90
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This demonstration project, "Strategies for Improving Adult Reading Performance," was designed to explore the potential of using the strategies and methods of the Reading Recovery Program to teach adult non-readers. Reading Recovery is an early intervention reading program for "at risk" first graders that was developed by Marie Clay in New Zealand. Clay's book, The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties (Heinemann Publishers, third edition 1985), is the foundation for many of the ideas presented in this project.

While many of the Reading Recovery strategies will carry-over to adult students, the complete, "pure" Reading Recovery approach would be difficult to accomplish. Children in Reading Recovery get a daily 30 minute private lesson with a highly trained Reading Recovery teacher. The children usually have good attendance and at six years of age they have not had the time to habituate poor reading strategies. When adults seek reading instruction, these bad habits and misconceptions about reading are deeply rooted. Adult attendance is not always regular and it's impossible to give adults the hours of instruction that are needed. The training to become a Reading Recovery teacher is long and intense making it impossible to duplicate for volunteer reading tutors. Although based on the Reading Recovery program, this project is not intended to be interpreted as "Reading Recovery for Adults."

For simplicity in writing and for the convenience of reading, the pronoun, he, was used in reference to "the student." Its use is not intended to imply a sex bias.

Strategies for Improving Adult Reading Performance

Reading is the active process of gaining meaning from print. A good reader knows that reading makes sense and always reads for meaning. Reading instruction should focus on reading for meaning through text reading. An overemphasis on work with words and sounds in isolation should be avoided. The non-reader must be taught that reading is more than just knowing words and letter sounds. Readers rely on three cueing systems as they read. A reader uses print or visual cues (letter - sound relationships), structure of the language, and meaning to read accurately. Non-readers need to learn strategies that incorporate all three cueing systems. The goal of reading instruction should be to help the non-reader develop these strategies into a self-improving system of reading. The ideas presented in this booklet are reading and writing activities that will help accomplish this goal.

I. Student Assessment

The tutor should find out what the student already knows about reading and build the reading lessons on the student's strengths. The following are assessment procedures that will give a more detailed and specific evaluation of the student.

A. Letter Identification

1. Use a list or individual letter cards but do not test in ABC order. (See Handout #1)
2. Can the student give a name for each letter? If not, does the student know the sound that a letter makes or can he think of a word that begins with that letter?
3. Does the student recognize both upper and lower case letters?
4. Does the student know how to write all the letters?

B. Reading Vocabulary

1. Use any basic sight word list of approximately twenty words. (See Handout #2)
2. This is a quick check to see if the student can read any basic sight words.
3. The words a student knows become the foundation of the reading lessons that are developed for that student.

C. Concepts about Print

1. In an informal way, pay attention to the student's ability to handle print:

   a. Does he know that print carries the message and that reading goes left to right?

   b. Does he understand basic punctuation and capitalization rules?

   c. Is there accurate one-to-one matching with voice to printed word?

D. Writing Vocabulary

1. Ask the student to write as many words as possible in a ten minute time period.

   a. If the student stops writing or runs out of ideas, give some prompts: Can you write.... (See Handout #3)

   b. Stop before time is up if the student is not able to write any more words even with prompts. Indicate how many of the ten minutes was spent on this task.

   c. Have the student go back and read the words he has written.

   d. A word can be counted as correct, if it is accurately spelled and the student can read it back.

2. This activity will add a few more words to the students's list of "known" words.

3. Also, pay attention to the way the student writes words. Is it done fluently, with ease? Does the student write left to right? Are the letters formed correctly?

E. Dictation

1. Dictate one or two simple sentences: (Examples) The bus is coming. The cat can run. The pot is on the table.

   Encourage the student to record any sounds he hears even if he doesn't know how to spell all the words in the sentence.

2. This activity will give some indication of the student's ability to analyze the word he hears and to find some way of recording the sound (he hears) as letters.

3. Record what the student knows about sentence formation. Is there spacing between words? Does the sentence begin with a capital letter and end with proper punctuation?

F. Text Reading

1. If the student has some reading ability, it is important for the tutor to observe and assess the student's text reading behaviors. This can be done by using an informal reading inventory. (sample readings from texts, inventory paragraphs,

etc.) An approximate reading level can be determined using these materials.

2. Behaviors to assess:

   a. Is the student reading fluently, with expression in the voice?

   b. Are punctuation marks observed?

   c. Does the student self-monitor his own reading? (Does he know when mistakes are made?)

   d. Are attempts made to self-correct errors? (Does the student restart a sentence or passage, look for letter - sound cues, check the pictures or story for meaning cues?)

G. Summary (See Handout #3)

When the assessment is completed, review what the student knows and decide what strengths the student has. To promote a feeling of success, point out to the student what he already knows about reading and writing. Build the reading lessons on the current knowledge and strengths of the student.

II. Writing Activities

Writing, an essential aspect of reading instruction, is the opposite process of reading. When we read, we see letters and then say or read sounds. Conversely, in the writing process we start with words (or sounds) and then supply the letters. Of the two processes, writing is slower, more halted and therefore provides an excellent time to explore and further develop letter - sound relationships.

A. Work on individual letters if needed but do not delay reading and writing activities until all letters are learned. Letters can be learned along the way.

B. Write at least two or three sentences in every lesson.

1. A suggestion to facilitate this activity is to make a scrapbook with pictures and simple captions.

a. Use pictures from magazines, catalogs, newspapers, old cookbooks, or perhaps the student will have a photo or two to contribute.

b. Captions should be student generated. (One or two sentences in the student's own words.) Writing his own sentences teaches the student that written words can have personal meaning; it makes an immediate connection between the spoken and the written word. Encourage the student to think of a sentence to go with the

picture. This task is sometimes difficult for the student. The tutor may have to use a more direct approach by asking a question or beginning the caption. Then the student answers the question or finishes the caption. The student may want to write several repetitive sentences: I like to camp. I like to hunt. I like to fish. etc. An established pattern like this makes the reading and writing predictable for the beginning reader.

c. Use a partner or shared writing method. Let the student provide the words, letters, and sounds he knows, the tutor can supply and write the rest.

d. Reread the text of the scrapbook frequently.

C. As lessons develop, continue to write sentences in every lesson. Continue partner writing but encourage the student to supply more of the words for the sentences. Suggest topics to write on that will include new words that the student has learned.

D. To assist the student in spelling words correctly, don't isolate the sounds in words by sounding each letter individually. Rather, say the word slowly stretching out the sounds for emphasis. Ask the student: What sounds can you hear? What letters would you expect to see? How

will you write it? Where will you put the letter? At first, the student may only be able to recognize consonant and long vowel sounds. Be ready to fill in difficult or unusual phonetic sounds for the student.

III. Reading Activities

It can be a challenge to find appropriate reading material for low level adult students. The selections must be meaningful and interesting with accompanying pictures (if possible) that help support the meaning of the text.

A. New Readings

Always introduce a new story with a brief discussion of the selection's important ideas and unfamiliar vocabulary. It is not necessary to thoroughly introduce all new vocabulary prior to reading. The student should be encouraged to use what he is learning about reading to "decode" new words.

B. Analyze Student's Reading

In each lesson select a reading passage of approximately 100 words to carefully evaluate.

1. Make note of the student's errors:
    a. errors are: substitutions, omissions, insertions, and words that must be read for the student.

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The white dog ran down the street.

white (insertion) run (substitution)

the (omission) street (word given)

b. repetitions (R) and self-corrections (SC) are not considered errors.

The dog R ran down the road|sc street.

R - student repeated: "The dog" - perhaps to verify his reading or as he anticipated the next word of the sentence.

sc - student said, "road" but corrected the word to "street" on his own.

2. Subtract the number of errors from the total number of words in the passage. Divide this difference by the total number of words to calculate the percent of reading accuracy. A rate 90% or better indicates that the student is reading at an appropriate level.

C. Questioning Strategies

As the student's mistakes are reviewed, try to determine how and why they were made. Use questioning strategies that help the student focus on the kind of errors made rather than the number of errors.

1. Ask the student to check to see if the word sounds right, looks right, and/or makes sense.

a. Meaning substitution:

The dog ran down the ~~street~~ road.

"Road" makes sense and sounds O.K. but the student has neglected the visual cues. To draw attention to the visual information say: "It could be road but look at street (point to the s) What would you expect to see at the beginning of road?" Student response: "R" Tutor: "What letter does this word (street) begin with? What could you try that begins with "s" and has a meaning similar to road?"

b. Visual error:

The ~~car~~ can went down the street.

Here the student has used visual information (at least for part of the word) but the substitution doesn't make sense or sound right. Have the student focus on what would make sense. Draw attention to the last letter of the word car.

c. Grammatical or structural error:

I ~~did~~ done my work.

The substitution done for did makes sense to the student and he probably has used some

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visual information by checking the beginning "d" but the substitution does not sound right. (Unfortunately for many students the error does sound acceptable.) There may be a need for a quick grammar lesson, then focus on the additional visual information of did vs. done.

d. Omissions and insertions:

The white dog ran down ~~the~~ street.

Ask the student to read each word with his finger. Ask: "Does that match? Are there enough words (or too many)?"
It is all right for the student to use his finger to point to the text to facilitate accurate reading. As his fluency and confidence build, he should need this aid less and will use it only with new or more difficult text.

e. When a student stops at a new word ask:
What could you try? What makes sense?
Do you know a word like that?
What do you know [about the word] that might help?

f. When the student is uncertain about his reading, ask: Was that ok? Why did you stop? What did you notice?

g. After accurate reading responses or self-corrections ask: How did you know that word? How did you figure out your mistake? Compliment the student: "I like the way you worked that out." Be specific with praise so the student knows which strategies he should continue to use for success in reading. "I like the way you checked the picture (illustrations) to see what word would make sense here."

2. Ask these questions to help the student focus on what can be done to correct reading errors. If the student doesn't respond, model the correct answers. Eventually the student will be responding to the questions and finally using the strategies himself to accurately predict new vocabulary.

3. After the student reads, be selective in choosing the errors that should be discussed with the student. Limit the teaching points to just one or two important concepts. It is unnecessary to go back over a reading selection and analyze every error.

D. Reread for Fluency

Reread familiar readings often to build fluency in reading. The more often a story is read, the more fluent the student's reading becomes. With fluency comes better understanding.

E. Model good reading behaviors

Reading to the student provides an important reading model. The non-reader needs to hear what reading sounds like when it is fluent and expressive . This is also a time when the tutor can read something of interest or necessity to the student.

IV. Additional Suggestions

A. Sight words

Limit the amount of time that words are worked with in isolation. Words should be learned in the context of a sentence or story; however, there are some common, basic words that the student may need to know fluently. The following are some suggestions to keep in mind.

1. Work only on two or three words at a time.
2. Never work with words that are similar (in spelling or sound) simultaneously.
3. Write words on chalk board, with paper and markers, with magnetic letters, etc. Vary the activity until the student knows the word "fluently" (can write the word quickly with ease.)
4. Occasionally words might be put on flash cards but this would only be advised for those students who are having a <u>very</u> difficult time remembering basic vocabulary.

B. Varied Activities

Adult students benefit from a variety of learning activities and materials just as children do. Make the extra effort to provide more than just "paper/pencil" work. If possible, provide every tutor with a chalkboard and magnetic letters.

1. Use of chalkboards enables the student to get up and move around a little. He can write bigger and get his whole arm into the movement as he forms letters and words. Erasing errors is quick and easy. The student can use his finger to write in the chalk dust to "feel" the formation of letters.

2. Manipulative materials, particularly magnetic letters, are valuable teaching tools. The letters can be used in many different ways throughout the reading lesson. (See handout #4)

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A	F	K	P	W	Z
B	H	O	J	U	
C	Y	L	Q	M	
D	N	S	X	I	
E	G	R	V	T	
a	f	k	p	w	z
b	h	o	j	u	a
c	y	l	q	m	
d	n	s	x	i	
e	g	r	v	t	g

BASIC WORD LIST

can	red
the	from
down	yes
and	like
here	up
am	come
little	is
one	cat
they	was
look	did
play	ran
on	it
see	said
big	we
to	no
him	do
you	saw
in	at
make	have
walk	go
stop	

Handout #3

Student Assessment

1. Letter Identification (do not test in ABC order)

2. Reading Vocabulary

3. Concepts About Print

4. Writing Vocabulary (ten minute activity)

   Prompts -- Can you write: I, is, a, an, to, the, we, me, at, on, in, go (going), my, cat (cats), sat, can, it, love, mom, dad, and, yes, no, dog, good, you, ball, he, she, play, car, for, come, like, see, here, up, look, this, has, had, have, did, do, day, box, zoo, park, cake, make, bus, stop, color words: red, blue, etc.; number words: one, two, etc.; names of family members; animal words: pig, cow, etc.

   Is the word spelled correctly? Can the student read it back?

5. Dictation (How well does the student represent letter sounds?)

6. Text Reading

7. Summary:

What does your student already know? What are his strengths? These are the things that you will build on as you help your student learn to read.

Handout #4

Suggestions for Using Magnetic Letters

Magnetic letters can:

1. Extend the knowledge of letters.

2. Be used to help associate upper and lower case letters.

3. Help draw attention to beginning letters and word patterns: hat, mat, cat.

4. Help the student learn endings, prefixes, or other small parts of words.

5. Help the student understand contractions and compound words.

6. Help draw attention to punctuation marks.

7. Be used to generate new words.

8. Be used to practice "writing" words fluently.

*The letters should be used on a vertical magnetic board. (The side of a metal file cabinet works well also.)